

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Parliamentary email servers breach

Senator: Senator Scott Ludlam

Question reference number: 71

Type of Question: FPA, Tuesday 27 May 2014, page 71

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 July 2014

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator LUDLAM: ASD tipped you off? All I have got is media reporting, because I was not in the cabinet in 2011, recognising this happened under the previous government. There were possibly—or almost certainly—changes of staff within the PMO?

Dr McCarthy: I would need to take that on notice.

Senator LUDLAM: That there have been changes of staff in the Prime Minister's office?

Dr McCarthy: No, the question you asked me about how we became aware.

Senator LUDLAM: Could you take on notice when you became aware. What I am most interested in is: who was then made aware? And why was the rest of this building not made aware? With a commercial internet service provider, generally industry lets you know when there has been a massive data breach, such as somebody gaining unauthorised access to your email. I am very interested to know why the parliament's email servers do not operate in the same way.

Dr McCarthy: I can take on notice your question about the date of PM&C's awareness, but it seems to me that the third question you asked is more appropriately directed to Parliamentary Services, given that, as I understand it, they administer the IT system in the building.

Senator LUDLAM: This is a policy question, not an administration question. What is the Australian government's policy as regards security of data traffic and communications for Australian MPs and staff?

Senator Abetz: That is a very broad question. It is a policy question, so I suppose it should be directed to me,

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

I can take it on notice for you and give you a considered answer as to what the full detailed policy is, but I would have thought it would be ultimately to make it as efficient as possible and as protected as possible.

Answer:

The Department of Parliamentary Services has responsibility for parliamentary ICT networks.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) became aware of the Parliamentary Services cyber security breach on 3 March 2011 through advice provided by the Australian Signals Directorate (then Defence Signals Directorate). The then Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard, was accordingly informed.

The requirements for securing Australian Government data traffic and ICT networks are included in the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF), produced by the Attorney-General's Department. The PSPF assists government agencies, responsible for the security of their own networks, to manage the risks to the security of their information. The PSPF is supplemented by the Information Security Manual, produced by the Australian Signals Directorate. Additional ICT safeguards are documented in the *Strategies to Mitigate Targeted Cyber Intrusions*, also produced by the Australian Signals Directorate.

The PSPF applies to all agencies under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*.